

LEARNING BRIEF

Learning from what we've done and how we did it

Strengthening the Kingdom of Lesotho's educational ecosystems for developing agency for sustainable development

<p>Date: August 2021</p> <p>Author Patricia Martin</p> <p>Contact bashni@miet.co.za</p> <p>Key words Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL); <i>Child and Youth Agency Framework (CYAF)</i>; co-educators; education for agency; educational ecosystem; Southern African Development Community (SADC) <i>Policy Framework on CSTL</i></p> <p>References See list at the end of the document</p>	<p>Key points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All SADC Member States, including Lesotho, have committed to developing child and youth agency to address persistent development challenges. • The <i>CSTL Policy Framework</i> and complementary <i>CYAF</i> provide a road-map for developing an education “ecosystem” for youth agency. • Developing agency requires a range of <i>co-educators</i> who are responsible for developing child and youth agency, under the leadership of the education sector. • To build agency, educational ecosystems must be systematized across the following “systemic building blocks”, which are described briefly by their strengths, biggest gaps and actions required to strengthen them in Lesotho: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ International instruments that mandate the development of educational ecosystems for child and youth agency ▪ Enabling national and policies and laws ▪ Programmes at scale for delivering agency by a continuum of <i>co-educators</i> through schools as hubs ▪ Qualified co-educators themselves ▪ Appropriate teaching and learning materials and infrastructure ▪ Adequate budgets to sustain the system ▪ Information management systems ▪ Leadership and coordination structures 	<p>MIET AFRICA's learning briefs are developed to share new ideas, best practices and learnings arising from our specific experience in implementing a project or through some other activity, so as to grow knowledge and share learning, with the ultimate aim of <i>improving the lives of children and youth</i>.</p>
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Introduction

By 2050, Africa will be home to a billion children. This represents an unprecedented opportunity to

... reap the demographic dividend and accelerate Africa's sustainable and equitable development. Children have the potential to transform Africa—but if neglected they could also increase the burden of poverty and inequality, whilst posing a serious risk to peace, security and prosperity.¹

By adopting *Africa's Agenda 2063* and *Africa's Agenda for Children 2040*, African States have committed to build human capital by realizing the right of all children, including the most vulnerable, to develop to their full potential. They have committed to do so through strengthened education systems that provide 21st century education that prepares children to be active, engaged, responsible 21st century citizens with the knowledge, skills and opportunities to bring a permanent end to the continent's greatest development challenges. Notably, they have committed to strengthen integrated transformational education and health systems to end persistent development challenges such as poverty, HIV&AIDS, early unintended pregnancies, gender inequality and climate change.

Various measures have been taken to fulfil these commitments, but progress has been slow. The UN's 2020 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) report confirmed that sub-Saharan Africa is at grave risk of not achieving the SDGs. Progress had slowed substantially even before the COVID-19 pandemic and has since deteriorated further.² The UN has declared this the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030 and has

called on all Member States to take extraordinary measures to ensure accelerated, sustainable progress. Furthermore, 2021 marks the 30th anniversary of the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*—the treaty whereby Member States of the African Union (AU) collectively committed themselves to reap the youth dividend.

Reaping this dividend requires urgent action to strengthen integrated education systems that build the agency of every child—in Lesotho, all other SADC Member States and the wider African region. This can and must be achieved through the operationalization of the *SADC CSTL Policy Framework* and supporting *Child and Youth Agency Framework (CYAF)* that were developed as vehicles to strengthen education systems to build human capital for sustainable development.

The CSTL Policy Framework and the Child and Youth Agency Framework

Most SADC Member States have undertaken curriculum reform to provide *21st century education* to prepare children for tackling *21st century challenges*. However, this has not developed child and youth agency adequately to address critical, persistent development challenges, such as high levels of HIV&AIDS among girls and young women, gender inequality, and early unintended pregnancies. Nor has it not secured the knowledge, competencies and opportunities required to empower children and youth to make responsible, informed decisions and to act to bring a permanent end to these challenges. This is evidenced by ongoing development challenges—for example, the persistently high risky sexual and social behaviour, high HIV&AIDS transmission rates among girls and young women, low antiretroviral therapy (ART)-adherence rates, high early pregnancy rates, exclusion of girls from school because of pregnancy and early marriages, and persisting gender inequality—despite the development and delivery of a combination of life skills, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in schools and national adolescent sexual and reproductive health (SRH) programmes.³ Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has eroded the fragile human capital foundations that had been built and has weakened the capacity of existing education and health systems to develop adolescent and youth agency. It has also deepened the vulnerability of children and pre-existing educational access and learning inequalities, access to health services, poverty and prevalence of harmful social and cultural behaviour.⁴ As a result, development challenges (such as early pregnancies, early marriages, child labour, school drop-outs, exposure to HIV&AIDS, non-ART adherence, and gender-based violence and abuse) have increased in the period 2020–21.⁵

MIET AFRICA's recent study on the impact of COVID-19 on children and youth confirms that the pandemic has deepened the vulnerability of children and youth to risks and their ability to overcome them, and as a result, increased risky behaviour that have exacerbated the development challenges in Lesotho and other SADC Member States. The study found that COVID-19:

... led to loss of livelihoods, significant stress on families, increased gender-based violence (GBV), and lack of access to safe spaces and services for youth, particularly girls and young women. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the six SADC Member States under review have all recorded higher rates of child, early and forced marriages, early pregnancies and school dropouts.*

The UN's 2021 call to action requires all SADC Member States, along with the rest of Africa, to pursue a "deliberate policy of human development and put human development at the centre of their growth and development strategy."⁶ This entails all Member States, including Lesotho, strengthening their education systems to build the *agency* of every child, adolescent and youth to act to bring an end to development challenges—specifically, to build their agency to make sound evidence-based decisions, act responsibly, provide leadership and advocate for supporting decisions and changes among their peers, homes, schools and communities.

* Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe

The SADC Policy Framework on Care and Support for Teaching and Learning

The *CSTL Policy Framework* mandates and commits all Member States to strengthen their educational ecosystems to be effective inclusive vehicles for developing human capital for sustainable development. It provides a roadmap on what the ecosystem should achieve and describes its components to achieve the two main outcomes:

- Universal access to basic education
- Quality, transformative education for developing agency of every child

It requires the development of integrated educational ecosystems coordinated by the Ministry of Education that bring together a diversity of role players to provide a combination of services and support to overcome access, participation and retention barriers and provide quality education for agency. CSTL schools are tasked with serving as facilitative hubs that coordinate the provision of quality education by all co-educators working in synergy to develop the agency of every child. However, while the *CTSL Policy Framework* provides detailed guidance on the partners and socioeconomic support that should be provided to address access barriers, it does not provide the same guidance on who the partners or co-educators are, and what is required to develop and deliver quality, relevant education to develop children's agency.

Child and Youth Agency Framework

The complementary *CYAF* was developed to address this gap. It provides a roadmap for the development and delivery of education for agency through an appropriate 21st century curriculum supported by appropriate, enabling national policies, laws and systems. It describes the 21st century curriculum for developing agency, the requirements for implementing it, and key features of the supporting national system. It is being piloted in 40 schools across four Member States, including Lesotho,* which are being supported to operationalize the *CSTL Policy Framework* and *CYAF* to build effective educational ecosystems that bring a continuum of co-educators together to provide inclusive, quality, transformative education to build agency. Both frameworks describe the building blocks that must be in place in all schools, as well as the systemic building blocks that must be in place at a national policy level within the relevant Ministries of Education, Health, Children, Youth and Gender (for example) to mandate, enable and support schools to become sustainable hubs for agency.

Given the impact of COVID-19 on education systems, increased vulnerability of children, and deepening development challenges, it is more important than ever that SADC Member States operationalize the CSTL Policy Framework, as augmented by the CYAF, to "reap the child and youth demographic dividend" to recover lost ground and accelerate Africa's sustainable and equitable development in this Decade of Action for achieving sustainable development.

Purpose of this brief

MIET AFRICA conducted research in the four pilot Member States (including Lesotho) to identify current strengths and weaknesses in the national educational ecosystems as measured against the *CSTL Policy Framework* and *CYAF*. This learning brief provides an overview of the problem and causes of limited youth agency, the required responses, key gaps and recommended actions for strengthening the policy environment to mandate, enable and support the development of all schools as CSTL coordinating hubs that:

- Facilitate provision of services and support to ensure inclusion, retention and completion of school by vulnerable children
- Facilitate the provision of quality, relevant 21st century education for agency to address pressing development challenges

It also provides an overview of the gaps and actions that must be taken to strengthen the following standard systemic building blocks:

* The others being Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe

- International instruments
- Enabling policies and laws
- Programmes
- Human resources
- Learning materials and Infrastructure
- Financial resources
- Information systems
- Leadership and coordination

Limited child and youth agency

The problem and causes

SADC Member States face common persistent development problems, including high HIV&AIDS infection rates among young people, especially girls, low ART adherence rates, high numbers of early marriages and pregnancies, gender inequality and climate change. An immediate cause of *some* of these problems is risky and unsustainable behaviour by young people. So the solution requires sustained changes in child and youth behaviour. Member States, including Lesotho, have committed, through various instruments and initiatives, including the following, to provide quality and inclusive education to develop the agency of adolescents and youth:

- East and Southern Africa (ESA) Ministerial Commitment
- *Agenda 2063: The Africa we want and Africa's Agenda for Children 2040*
- SADC Regional Strategy for HIV prevention, treatment and care and sexual and reproductive health and rights among key populations (2018)
- *SADC Policy Framework on CSTL*

These commitments have led to curriculum innovations, including the introduction of subjects such as Life Skills, CSE and environmental studies. However, this has not resulted in the required change in behaviour among the growing young population. The reasons are many, but in summary, many vulnerable children still do not access and complete school because of social, economic and health-related barriers. Furthermore, those who are in school are not acquiring the requisite competencies and afforded the opportunities to apply their learned knowledge.

Teachers cannot, nor are they expected to, provide the full package of services and support and teaching necessary for developing agency. This is the responsibility of a range of other role players—or *co-educators*—from whom children learn and who are responsible for providing care, support and services necessary for developing their agency. These co-educators, who make up an educational ecosystem for developing agency, include:

- Their caregivers* and families
- Their friends and peers
- Their teachers
- The media
- Community and religious leaders

* In this brief, "caregivers" is used to designate parents, other members of the family, guardians or other adults who provide daily care to the learner.

- Politicians
- Service providers, such as healthcare workers and social workers
- NGOs and development partners

However, many co-educators cannot provide the support and continuing education and opportunities children need because of their own circumstances, such as poverty, harmful traditional and religious values and practices, lack of knowledge, lack of a mandate, support and resources to provide the required services, support and education.

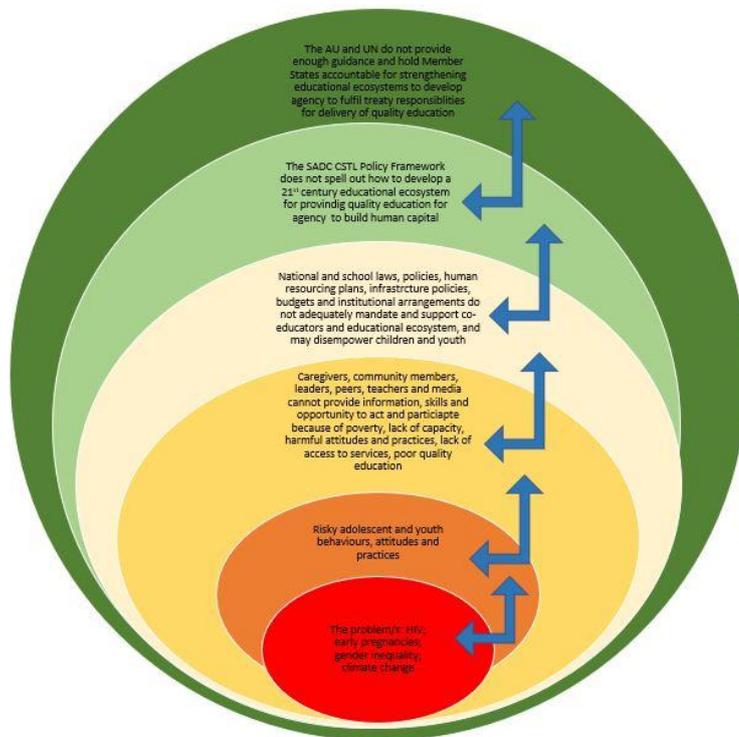


FIGURE 1: THE ECOSYSTEMIC CAUSES OF PERSISTING DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES DRIVEN BY RISKY BEHAVIOUR

The solution

To address the immediate cause of the problem, the whole educational ecosystem must be strengthened across all levels. Developing agency of the whole and growing population requires that national educational ecosystems be strengthened to:

- Ensure all co-educators recognize and understand their role
- Are mandated and supported to provide the required support, education and opportunities

This in turn requires the strengthening of an *enabling system* made up of:

- Laws, policies and strategies that mandate and enable co-educators, and do not create legal barriers to children and youth acting responsibly
- Programmes at scale to provide co-educators with the support they need to fulfil their roles and that secure the provision of quality education for agency facilitated through a national network of CSTL schools
- The required human resources to implement the programmes in the form of adequately mandated, trained, supported, and accountable co-educators
- The required infrastructure

- The required financial resources
- Leadership, coordination and supporting institutional arrangements to oversee the educational ecosystem and co-educators

To ensure that all national systems are developed to provide education for agency of all children in the region and continent, SADC and the AU and UN must enable, guide, support and hold Member States accountable for developing the required system through, for example:

- Adopting the *CYAF* as an addendum to the *CSTL Policy Framework*
- Developing General Comments on treaty implementation responsibilities
- Holding General Days of Discussion and facilitating sub-regional and regional policy dialogues, seminars and webinars on the importance of, and how to develop educational ecosystems for, child and youth agency

Child and youth agency in and through the system

It is crucial that children and youth themselves be enabled to participate meaningfully in the development and delivery of an effective national educational system as they are both beneficiaries and co-educators. They must therefore be included in all system's strengthening planning and decision-making.

Advocacy and system–strengthening priorities

Inclusive, evidence-based and responsive system's strengthening measures

All SADC Member States, including Lesotho, must strengthen their educational ecosystems across the systemic building blocks by understanding:

- Their legal responsibilities and mandates, and fulfilling them in the design, development and operationalization of their systems
- The biggest challenges that prevent adolescents and youth from accessing the information they need, developing the skills to understand and apply it in their daily lives to make responsible decisions in their best interests and those around them
- What works and what does not, so as to strengthen their systems to address the challenges

System's strengthening priorities to build agency to end HIV infections

SADC Member States, including Lesotho, have signed global and regional instruments committing to ensure that children and youth are empowered through integrated education systems to alter their risky behaviour that drive high HIV and infection rates, especially among girls and young women. However, the measures taken have not achieved the promises made. The policy audit found that all co-educators are not enabled to provide support and teaching and learning for the development of agency.

Available evidence points to the need for developing prevention programmes that address the multiple and intersecting causes through integrated responses that reach the key populations.⁷ Systems must be deliberately designed to address the *multiple* risks faced by key population—including social, economic, political, not just biomedical, risks. A review of best practices confirms the need for multi-faceted advocacy and communication interventions that address the combination of adolescent-specific factors, rather than just one or the other. It also found that the current system does not respond to the most pressing challenges preventing children and youth from acquiring the knowledge, skills and opportunities to act responsibly in their homes, schools, communities and countries.

To be sustainable and reach all children and adolescents, interventions must be systematized: reaching only *some* of the children *some* of the time will not have the population-scale transformation required. For this reason, responses *through* the education systems are favoured as they have the required education mandate and authority, as well as the reach, for scalability.

The following table provides an overview of some of the features that are essential to address the most pressing and common barriers to developing adolescent and youth agency.

TABLE 1: BARRIERS TO ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH AGENCY

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES	REQUIRED RESPONSES
There is a lack of available, quality prevention services ⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to adolescent and youth-friendly services, <i>plus</i> community-led advocacy • Use systems that ensure they are rolled out at scale to reach the full population, especially the most vulnerable and at risk
Introducing adolescent-friendly services alone is not enough: they must be part of a comprehensive community-led empowerment, communications and advocacy programme that provides services <i>and</i> the required advocacy activities that increase awareness and demand for services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine services with activities that empower adolescents and youth to make positive, informed, responsible and independent use of the services <p>When affected populations are aware of their rights and responsibilities to use the services and supported to do so, and when the service is framed as an empowering prevention method and positive life choice, there is an increase in the uptake of services.⁹</p>
Many young boys and men exhibit low levels of knowledge of their HIV status, in part because of minimal contact by men with the health system.	<p>Develop programmes targeting boys and men that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase their access to the health system to ensure early testing and treatment • Effect attitude and behaviour change to address gender stereotypes and inequality
The heightened risk of infection among adolescent girls and young women could be mitigated by their routine access to effective SRH services, especially modern contraception and family planning.	Prevention efforts must include measures to improve population-scale access to SRH services (especially modern family planning and contraception services) for adolescent girls and young women. ¹⁰
Gender inequalities are a key barrier. Improving gender equality has been limited by the failure to address the underlying factors that disempower girls and women.	<p>Improve the power girls and young women have over their bodies and choices through measures to address gender inequality, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing them with cash grants or incentives • Ensuring their enrolment and retention at, and completion of, school, as well as providing academic support to improve education outcomes • Ensuring that should female learners fall pregnant, they be guaranteed the right to return to school and receive support upon their return to allow completion
Parental attitudes, values and practices are a major barrier to knowledge and the use of SRH services and positive behaviour.	<p>CSE is the responsibility of all caregivers, not just schools and teachers. CSE must therefore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be provided across the child's life—from the home, in communities, in health facilities, schools and tertiary institutions • Include caregivers, who must be empowered, enabled and motivated to continue and support quality CSE in the home¹¹
<p>Laws that criminalize and prevent access to services for key populations are a key driver of poor access to services and risk of HIV transmission.¹² Harmful laws include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws that criminalize same-sex relationships¹³ 	Review and revise enabling laws and policies to ensure they do not discriminate against key populations or prevent their access to services.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES	REQUIRED RESPONSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age of consent to HIV testing laws • Laws that allow child marriages and other harmful practices¹⁴ <p>Participation of affected stakeholders is vital to success.</p> <p>“Where [affected] communities are able to participate in decision-making and service delivery, outcomes and impacts have generally improved.”¹⁵ Conversely, where they are excluded, progress has stalled among key populations—driven by their marginalization.</p>	<p>There must be meaningful and routine participation by adolescents and young women and men affected by HIV&AIDS in decision-making and HIV service delivery.¹⁶</p> <p>Although progress has been made towards the 90:90:90 targets,* significant gaps remain. To escalate and sustain progress, the involvement of the affected populations in facility and national decision-making about HIV&AIDS is required, as well as their participate in service delivery.¹⁷</p>

Developing agency through educational ecosystems

The CSTL Policy Framework and CYAF provide a legally mandated roadmap to strengthen Lesotho's educational ecosystem for developing agency to build human capital to achieve an HIV-free generation of young people.

To develop agency to address the developmental challenges, every child and young person must be provided with:

- *Information* (through CSE, and on gender equality and climate change, etc.) from a diversity of sources on the implications, different approaches, rights and responsibilities, global, regional, national goals, etc.
- *Support to develop analytical, communication and advocacy competencies* to find, analyse, understand and apply information to identify challenges and make responsible, evidence-based and rights-based decisions to change behaviour, attitudes, practices and values for themselves and their families, schools, communities and countries
- *The opportunity* to apply the information, advocate for and implement the plans to bring about the required changes in behaviour, practices, values, policies and instruments

Treaty and development instruments obligate *education systems* to develop agency because they have universal reach. However, schools acting alone cannot ensure universal quality education for agency. What is required is *the delivery of 21st century education for agency by co-educators acting in unity within a national educational ecosystem*. But this requires education ministries to take the lead in systematizing and coordinating educational ecosystems that bring the various role players (schools, teachers, caregivers, communities, peers, the media, traditional and religious leaders, healthcare providers, development partners etc.) together to:

- Address access barriers
- Provide quality, transformational education for agency—as co-educators—across multiple educational platforms

To ensure that every child is included, receives quality education and *develops agency*, CSTL schools must be universalized as hubs of the national educational ecosystems. Educational ecosystems must therefore be systematized across eight “systemic building blocks”. The biggest and most common gaps in these systemic building blocks in Lesotho are tabulated below.

* UNAIDS' target that by 2020: 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status; 90% of all people diagnosed with HIV will receive sustained ART; and 90% of all people receiving ART will have viral suppression.

TABLE 2: SYSTEMIC STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES AND NEXT STEPS FOR LESOTHO

SYSTEMIC BUILDING BLOCK	STRENGTHS	BIGGEST GAPS	ACTION REQUIRED
<p>International, continental and regional (SADC) instruments that obligate and guide Member States to develop educational ecosystems for quality education for agency through the coordinated action of co-educators under the leadership of the education sector</p>	<p>Lesotho has ratified and/or endorsed multiple instruments that can only be implemented through educational ecosystems that provide for developing child and youth agency, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESA Commitment • <i>Africa’s Agenda 2063</i> and the <i>Sustainable Development Agenda</i> • <i>Africa’s Agenda for Children 2040</i> • <i>The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child</i> • SADC Regional HIV and AIDS strategy • The <i>CSTL Policy Framework</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UN and AU do not have frameworks in place that direct Member States to develop educational ecosystems for developing child and youth agency. • While the <i>CSTL Policy Framework</i> provides some guidance, it is not universally known and understood within the country, nor has it been mainstreamed within the national educational ecosystem. • Lesotho has not yet developed a CSTL National Model that unites, obligates and guides the development and delivery of an educational ecosystem for agency by all co-educators. • The country is missing key opportunities in its treaty, development and HIV progress reports to profile the <i>CSTL Framework</i> and measures to develop agency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domesticate the <i>CSTL Policy Framework</i> and <i>CYAF</i> by developing a CSTL National Model that mandates and provides direction on systematizing a national educational ecosystem of co-educators for building human capital • Develop a communications plan for raising awareness of the frameworks and associated roles and responsibilities of co-educators: education, health, parents, communities, the media • Document the steps taken to operationalize the frameworks
<p>Enabling national and policies and laws that mandate the delivery of education for agency through educational ecosystems to achieving SDGs, HIV targets, and treaty responsibilities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 21st century National Curriculum Policy Framework (NCF) • CSE policies and curriculum • School–Health policies • CSTL National Model 	<p>Lesotho has adopted several policies and strategies that advance the development of agency through collaborative partnerships to address development challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Health Strategy for Adolescents and Young People 2015–2020 This mandates the delivery of integrated services and support through a variety of partners to empower children and youth to engage in healthy behaviour. • The Curriculum and Assessment Policy (2009), which embeds HIV prevention and SRHR in the curriculum • Policies and strategies mandating collaborative action through schools to ensure access to treatment, care and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While Lesotho has a well-developed policy framework governing the health and education sector partnerships, it does not have a standalone HIV-prevention strategy and supporting costed implementation plan that consolidates and addresses measures to develop agency and that spells out the roles of the different sectors. • There is limited implementation of policies and strategies. This is partly driven by the absence of a costed implementation plan. • Lesotho’s <i>Extra Curricular Risk Reduction and Avoidance Handbook for Youth</i> has been developed to address adolescent-specific risks and risky 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a national, multisectoral adolescent and youth HIV&AIDS prevention strategy that develops agency for safe and healthy behaviour, and avoidance of risky behaviour, through an educational ecosystem • Review the national Curriculum and Policy Statement to make agency an explicit priority and provide guidance and assessment standards, as well as procedures to mainstream it within the educational ecosystem • Finalize the development of the National CSTL Model to provide a road map for operationalizing the CSTL educational ecosystem

SYSTEMIC BUILDING BLOCK	STRENGTHS	BIGGEST GAPS	ACTION REQUIRED
	<p>support services, and providing SRH services, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Lesotho Education Sector HIV and AIDS Policy ▪ The School Health and Nutrition Policy (being finalized) ▪ The Ministry of Health's Adolescent Health Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Minimum Standards and standardized guidelines for adolescent-friendly health services <p>These provide a framework for the provision of quality youth-friendly SRHR that comply with WHO guidelines.</p>	<p>behaviours, including those practised by boys and young men.</p> <p>However, the handbook is not a policy document, but rather a communications tool that has limited reach and coverage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Curriculum and Assessment Policy does not make agency an explicit educational priority and outcome, nor does it provide direction for realizing this through a CSTL educational ecosystem. However, the country has initiated a review of its curriculum policy to address SDG challenges, and this will include issues of inclusivity. • Lesotho has not yet completed the development of its National CSTL model. • Age of marriage laws perpetuate gender inequalities and undermine the agency of girls. The minimum age of marriage is 18 for boys, but 16 for girls. The Child Protection and Welfare Amendment Bill 2018 seeks to amend this by stipulating a minimum age of marriage of 18 for all. However, it has not yet been enacted. • Legislative silence on the age of consent to access SRHR services may limit access to services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for the enactment of the Child Protection and Welfare Amendment Bill • Lobby for the legal clarification on the age at which children may access SRHR services without parental consent
<p>The following programmes at scale for delivering agency by a continuum of co-educators through schools as hubs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A curriculum that that builds capacity for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesotho's review of its curriculum offers a key opportunity to ensure that agency is mainstreamed through a national educational ecosystem. • Lesotho has embedded CSE into its education curriculum; this is supported by the provision of health and related 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the country has innovative programmes in place for advancing agency, the major challenge lies in scale, quality and sustainability. The programmes are not provided sustainably at scale; rather, they are provided in only <i>some</i> of the schools only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the curriculum review to strengthen the educational ecosystem for agency using the <i>CSTL Framework</i> and <i>CYAF</i> to develop a CSTL 21st century, transformational curriculum for the development of adolescent and youth agency across all systemic platforms

SYSTEMIC BUILDING BLOCK	STRENGTHS	BIGGEST GAPS	ACTION REQUIRED
<p>advocacy and related skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School health • CSE for the provision of knowledge and services • Extra-curricular peer groups and clubs • Debating clubs • Child and youth media 	<p>services that are largely aligned to the WHO guidelines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The country has well-established programmes for delivery of youth-friendly health services. It is one of the only SADC Member States that has a dedicated behaviour change and communication programme. • The coordinated adolescent Health Program (Ministry of Health) and Adolescent Programme (Ministry of Education and Training [MOET]) provide integrated programmes. <p>The MOET provides information to learners through the curriculum and coordination of interventions in schools, while the Ministry of Health provides youth-friendly health services.</p> <p>The programmes have been successful, with a notable increase in adolescent-friendly service delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change is included in Lesotho's integrated curriculum and assessment policy from primary to secondary levels of schooling. <p>Mainstreaming of climate change in the curriculum ensures learners acquire adaptive skills and awareness of climate resilient practices.</p> <p>Subjects such as Agriculture and Geography have explicitly integrated climate change concepts. A climate change toolkit has been developed, and programmes are implemented in schools and communities to promote climate resilience.</p>	<p>Reaching many of the schools is hampered by lack of resources, including transport.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the country has a 21st century curriculum, it is missing key elements for building agency—not only social and economic, but civil and political as well. • The National Curriculum Framework and supporting enabling policy framework (such as the CSE curriculum and integrated school health programme) exhibit key gaps, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information about and opportunities to exercise civic and political responsibilities and rights through decision-making platforms in families, schools, and nationally ▪ Classroom practices and extra-curricular activities to support the development leadership skills as core 21st century competencies ▪ Recognition and measurement of the required skills for exercising agency as a 21st century learning outcome ▪ Pedagogical limitations and support for all co-educators to build capacity to fulfil their roles ▪ Inadequate infrastructure and materials to realize the relevant curriculum goals ▪ Inadequate financial resources to secure implementation • The 2016 ESA report noted that Lesotho does not have an out-of-school SRHR strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the National Curriculum Framework, CSE curriculum and integrated school health policy has clearly defined and measurable learning outcomes for agency—social and economic, as well as civil and political • To develop agency, develop integrated programmes (with supporting pedagogy and extra-curricular activities) delivered in and through schools by co-educators • Develop the competencies, capacities and support for all co-educators to fulfil their respective roles • Strengthen infrastructure (including youth-friendly health facilities; information, communication & technology; water, sanitation & hygiene [WASH] facilities) to support environmentally sustainable practices and universal, sustained access to information and opportunities to acquire skills and exercise agency • Increase financial resources for initiatives to strengthen CSTL schools and delivery of education for agency • Strengthen inclusive leadership and coordination to enable and develop agency of children—in schools, communities and nationally. • Develop an out-of-school programme for developing agency

SYSTEMIC BUILDING BLOCK	STRENGTHS	BIGGEST GAPS	ACTION REQUIRED
<p>Mandated and qualified co-educators across the continuum, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregivers • Teachers • Peers • Health and social workers • Civil society organizations • Community leaders • Media 	<p>Lesotho has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated CSE into the pre-service training programme for teachers since 2013 <p>It also reorientated all teachers when the new CSE curriculum was introduced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universalized training of healthcare workers on youth-friendly SRHR services <p>All nurses in health facilities received training on the National Minimum Standards for Provision of Adolescent-Friendly Health Services. This offered a unique opportunity for providing support for health workers as co-educators for agency through the development and integration appropriate training modules and ongoing support for health workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While Lesotho has a well-developed policy and programmatic framework supporting the development of agency, the challenge lies in the quality and delivery of the curriculum, with teacher attitudes, values and practices recognized as a particular challenge. • The high cost of in-service training has resulted in very limited in-service training on CSE: by 2015, only a hundred secondary teachers had been trained. • Information was not available on the support teachers and other co-educators have received to implement 21st century teaching for agency. <p>However, given that studies have shown that the effectiveness of “sexuality education is affected by religious and cultural beliefs”¹⁸ of both parents and teachers, there is a need for strengthening teacher and co-educator capacity to use CSE and other development-related information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all co-educators recognize their role in the educational ecosystem. • <i>Parents as co-educators</i> is a neglected area, with little direction in place to formalize and secure their role. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a human resources development strategy for building the capacity and support for all co-educators (caregivers, teachers, healthcare workers, peers, the media, community and religious leaders, etc.) to enable them to provide education for agency • Develop specific training and support modules for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers in pilot schools ▪ Caregivers as co-educators ▪ Health workers

SYSTEMIC BUILDING BLOCK	STRENGTHS	BIGGEST GAPS	ACTION REQUIRED
<p>Appropriate teaching and learning materials and infrastructure to support education for agency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to diverse media and technology • Enough written and published materials • Environmentally-friendly infrastructure • Youth-friendly accessible SRH services 	<p>Lesotho has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established several youth-friendly health services and has trained healthcare providers • An abundance of education and teaching resources to support educators and learners <p>However, limited financial resources have resulted in limited distribution of these materials. But as in several other countries, Lesotho has instituted innovative solutions to this challenge—notably the use of online teaching and learning platforms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate infrastructure is a common, crosscutting concern that impacts on delivery of CSE and SRH services in schools and clinics. For example, specialized spaces for adolescents and youth are limited or not available in schools and health facilities. • There is a lack of teaching and learning support material to facilitate the development of agency and the use of learner-centred practices. Such materials must be developed, drawing on lessons from other countries where good practices are in place. • Teaching and learning resources for the use of knowledge to develop agency is inadequate. For example, information, education & communication (IEC) materials are not universally available. • Opportunities to exercise agency are limited by infrastructure constraints. For example, youth-friendly health facilities are not universally accessible, notably due to a lack of transport. • Access to information—critical to 21st century skills—is hampered by limited infrastructure, connectivity and electronic equipment. More generally, infrastructure for developing agency is inadequate, including access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technology ▪ IEC materials ▪ Environmentally-friendly infrastructure ▪ Adequate WASH facilities 	<p>Develop, cost and implement an infrastructure development plan and monitor its progress to support an effective 21st century curriculum and CSTL schools as hubs of educational ecosystems for developing agency.</p>

SYSTEMIC BUILDING BLOCK	STRENGTHS	BIGGEST GAPS	ACTION REQUIRED
<p>Adequate budgets to sustain the system and the suite of services and support at scale</p>	<p>Lesotho allocates 56% of its health budget to HIV&AIDS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate education and health budgets limit scaled-up, sustained delivery of support and services and quality education for agency—and drives the other major systemic gaps. • Budget information is limited. • Budget cuts post-COVID-19 will aggravate resource inadequacies. • The lack of costed implementation plans to support 21st century educational ecosystems makes it impossible to mobilize appropriate, sustainable resources. 	<p>Develop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costed implementation plans to support the educational ecosystem in pilot schools and then country-wide • A national resource mobilization strategy to ensure adequate, sustained funding of system-strengthening initiatives
<p>Information management systems for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring progress in acquiring agency • Strengthening systems <p><i>The CSTL reporting tool (structured around the existing Policy Framework and implementing mechanisms) addresses many of the issues.</i></p>	<p>There is an existing CSTL monitoring framework against that pilot Member States (including Lesotho) must integrate into their national education monitoring systems and report to SADC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National educational assessment curriculum frameworks and evaluation systems do not adequately define agency competencies, outcomes and measures of progress. • The MOET has not yet mainstreamed the CSTL reporting framework. • Global, regional and national monitoring frameworks do not assess improvements in strengthening educational ecosystems for providing education for agency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and integrate agency outcomes (including civic and political agency) as a core, measurable educational outcome of the 21st century curriculum, and develop aligned indicators and assessment procedures for monitoring and reporting on the development of skills • Integrate the CSTL reporting framework into the education monitoring and reporting system • Embed system-strengthening indicators for measuring progress in developing educational ecosystem for agency in management information systems • Report on the operationalization of the <i>CSTL Policy Framework</i> and <i>CYAF</i> in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All national sectoral reports (health, education, protection, etc.) ▪ National development reports ▪ Member State reports to SADC, AU, UN, etc.

SYSTEMIC BUILDING BLOCK	STRENGTHS	BIGGEST GAPS	ACTION REQUIRED
<p>Leadership and coordination structures that are inclusive, representative and multi-sectoral, and which engage in the co-identification of challenges and development of solutions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-educators across the continuum • Children and youth • Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesotho has established a technical working group to coordinate its ESA commitments with a clear term of reference and action plan. • The health and education sectors have established learner care and welfare support teams to coordinate all health-related interventions and services in schools. • The MOET has established a FutureLife-Now! task team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of reference have not been developed for all the structures. Furthermore, these structures were not specifically developed to align with the shared national goals of coordinating a national educational ecosystem for developing agency. • Among the various structures, there is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The potential for duplication of roles and responsibilities, and a lack of clarity on how they relate to and support each other ▪ Limited accountability and reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a leadership and coordination framework, strategy and implementation plan to consolidate, align and ensure mutual support across structures to advance inclusive educational ecosystems at national, Education and Health Ministry and school levels • Develop terms of reference for all structures delineating roles and responsibilities and measures to support the development of capacity for effective, inclusive leadership and coordination

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- ¹² UNAIDS. Op cit.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ ESA Ministerial Commitment (2013)
- ¹⁵ UNAIDS Op cit.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ SADC Gender Protocol. Op cit.